

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE NEVADA CONSERVATION PRACTICE SPECIFICATION

UPLAND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

(Acres)

CODE 645

I. SCOPE

The work shall consist of management of resources to provide food, cover, water, space, and other life requirements to sustain upland wildlife populations on the land.

II. SPECIFICATIONS

The Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guides (WHEG) specify the type, amount and distribution of habitat requirements for particular kinds of wildlife. The Nevada Biology Technical Note #41, contain the following WHEG's for the following wildlife species: Chukar, Desert Bighorn Sheep, Mule Deer, Pheasant, Pronghorn, and Sage Grouse. Those beginning with "AZ" are from Arizona and can be adaptable in Nevada. They are also available in the Biology Tech Notes. They include: AZWHEG #1 Mule Deer, AZWHEG #2 Pronghorn, AZWHEG #3 Elk, AZWHEG #4 Pheasant, AZWHEG #5 Scaled Quail, AZWHEG #6 Gambel Quail, AZWHEG #7 Javelina, AZWHEG #8 Morning Dove, AZWHEG #9 Beaver, AZWHEG #10 Desert Bighorn Sheep, AZWHEG #11 White-wing Dove, AZWHEG #12 Riparian, AZWHEG #13 Whitetail Deer.

The completion of a WHEG will be the Documentation Sheet for this practice. The Documentation Sheet for Annual Food Plot is found under 645-A.

III. PLANNING

The total planned wildlife management area must have a minimum habitat evaluation score of 0.5 or greater. If the scores are not met then the planner must plan and apply practices to insure that the minimum scores

are achieved. The lowest component scores in the WHEG indicate problem areas.

IV. APPLICATION

NRCS practices are used to solve identified problems on the WHEG. They can be any practice in the FOTG Section IV and are applied according to individual practice specifications.

V. EFFECTS

The ultimate measure of success is acceptance and use of the habitat by target species for survival and reproduction of sustainable populations. Documentation of successful management is recorded on the WHEG and the FOCS benchmark compared to the evaluations. If wildlife is the primary management objective, all FOCS wildlife evaluations should be used. In FOCS, if wildlife is secondary, only the Habitat Suitability Index, HSI (WHEG) score is used.

VI. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Endangered species habitat must be identified and protected without alteration, unless modified as a result of consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Measures and methods that enhance fish and wildlife values, protect visual resources, and maintain key shade, food, and den trees shall be performed when specified.

Operations shall be done in such a manner that erosion and air and water pollution are minimized and held within legal limits.

All work and operations shall be conducted in accordance with proper safety codes with due regard to the safety of all persons and property.

For more specifics on habitat management or planning for wildlife not covered by WHEGs, contact the NRCS Biologist.

CONSIDERATIONS

General habitat needs of some upland game animals:

Pheasant Habitat

Food

Ring-necked pheasants depend heavily upon large and small grain crops for food. Where these crops are grown, end rows or small plots can be left unharvested. Otherwise, small plots (food plots) can be grown for them in odd corners, along ditches or fencing, etc. Such plantings generally must be made each year. Corn is the most preferred. Insects are also an important food in the spring. They are promoted with no-till farming.

Cover

Nesting cover is required for pheasants. They usually nest in barley, alfalfa, and etc. fields, as well as in pastures or in uncropped fields having enough cover to protect the nests. They also nest along fences and ditchbanks if sufficient cover is available. Hedgerow plantings along fences, roadways, ditches and levees help to provide and protect nesting cover.

Brooding cover is usually adequate during the summer in existing fields that are cropped or in pastures.

Fall and winter cover is usually available in harvested fields where the stubble or other crop residue is left standing. Hedgerows along fences, ditchbanks, levees, and roadways are desirable and often necessary to provide such cover.

Water

Pheasants need water. Green grass and irrigated cropland usually provide enough moisture, however, in dryland areas pheasants survive only around ponds and along creeks or other waterways. Young chicks cannot survive on brackish water. Small basins or tanks can help provide the necessary water in critical areas. See Animal Guides or Wildlife

(Pheasant) Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) - Biology Tech Note #41.

Quail Habitat

Food

Quail rely heavily upon winter annuals for food; both the greens and later on seeds. Choice foods such as milo or grain sorghum, millets, wheat, sunflower, or legumes can be planted to supplement the natural food supply. Insects are also important food in the spring. They are promoted with no-till farming.

Cover

Escape cover: Quail need scattered clumps of dense, four foot over-head ground cover, in which they can escape predators. Hedgerows of rose, berry thickets and quail bushes are examples. Well constructed brush piles make good substitutes but must be renewed every 3 to 5 years.

Roosting cover: Quail roost in trees or tall shrubs and need protection during cold, wet periods of the year. Evergreen trees such as Arizona cypress are good, as are shrubs, such as quail bush, olive, willow rabbitbrush, saltbush, and wild rose. Quail roosts or elevated brush piles can be constructed to serve as substitutes.

Water

Quail require water and if natural occurring springs, seeps, creeks, ponds or the like are not available, a suitable substitute such as a guzzler must be supplied. See Animal Guides and Wildlife (Quail) Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) - Biology Tech Note NV #41.

Dove Habitat

Food

Doves are basically seed eaters. They rely on early maturing annuals such as red maids, fiddleneck, milk thistle, and sunflowers.

Grain sorghum, millet, wheat and sunflower are some of the choice plants that can be grown for doves to improve their food supply.

Cover

The cover requirements for doves are not specific. They prefer to nest in trees but will nest in shrubs or on the ground. They prefer

to feed in open fields rather than in heavy cover.

Water

Doves require water daily. They drink at the margin of ponds, pools, streams and the like where vegetative cover is not heavy. Ordinarily they will fly a mile or so to obtain water. See Animal Guides and Wildlife (Dove) Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) - Biology Tech Note NV #41.

Deer Habitat

Food

Deer are basically browsers, feeding largely upon the leaves and stems of woody plants but they also consume green grass and herbage to a considerable extent.

Mature stands of timber shade out most of the understory of shrubs, forbs and grasses that provide deer food and must be opened up by harvesting or selective thinning to provide openings in which such foods can grow.

Mature brush stands also provide little deer feed because most growing tips are out of reach of the deer and the canopy shades out forbs and grasses. By manipulating such brush stands, we can create openings for forbs and grasses and get new seedlings and sprouts started at the ground level for deer to eat.

In open grassland, hedgerow plantings and tree plantings will provide better food conditions for deer. Buckbrush, deer brush, Mountain mahogany and bitter brush are choice shrubs that can be planted for deer feed. Alfalfa and other legumes can also be planted for deer along with adapted pasture grasses.

Cover

Deer typically require some woody cover dense enough for them to hide in. Tall herbage such as corn and sunflowers can also supply such cover to some extent. In timber and brushland the cover often is too extensive. Good deer habitat has an interspersed cover types trees, brush, and open grassland.

Water

Deer require drinking water. The amount they need depends considerably upon the feed they are using; however, the normal distribution of water for livestock is usually adequate for deer. See Animal Guides and Wildlife (Deer) Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) - Biology Tech Note NV #41.

Other Considerations

Water Quantity

This practice may have an effect on the quantity of surface runoff and an increase in transpiration due to an increase in dense vegetative growth.

1. Effects the water budget, especially effects on volumes and rates of runoff, infiltration, evaporation, transpiration, deep percolation, and ground water recharge.
2. Effects on the volume of downstream flow or aquifers that might cause undesirable environmental, social, or economic effects.
3. Potential for a change in plant growth and transpiration because of changes in the volume of soil water.

Water Quality

This practice can be applied to a multitude of different land uses, and there can be a variety of individual practices applied. The hydrologic regime will be affected, improved, or worsened with respect to water quality, depending on the activities and practices included and must be evaluated for each site. Examples include:

1. Effects on erosion and the movement of sediment and soluble and sediment-attached substances carried by runoff.
2. Effects on the movement of dissolved substances below the root zone and to ground water.
3. Potential effects on wetlands or water-related wildlife habitats.
4. Effects of pesticide and nutrient use on surface and ground water quality.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

When plants are to be planted, list the selected plants for the resource area and site. The food plot acreage to be planted must be greater than 1/4 acre.

For specific details on habitat management for species of wildlife not listed above, check your animal and plant guide file and/or contact the State Biologist. Practices to follow include: FENCING (382), TREE/SHRUB ESTABLISHMENT (612), RIPARIAN FOREST BUFFER (392), SPRING DEVELOPMENT (574), WINDBREAK/SHELTERBELT ESTABLISHMENT (380), WILDLIFE WATERING FACILITY (648), RANGE PLANTING (550), AND PASTURE AND HAY PLANTING (512), OR ANNUAL FOOD PLOTS (645-A).

For specific watering requirements for wildlife species see the practice WILDLIFE WATERING FACILITY (648).

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The following actions shall be planned to insure that this practice functions as intended throughout its expected life.

1. These actions include normal repetitive activities in the application and the use of

the practice (operation), and repair and upkeep of the practice (maintenance).

2. The plantings will be inspected yearly to maintain the intended purpose, to protect it from adverse impacts such as excessive human activity, pest damage, livestock damage, fire, pesticide or herbicide use on adjacent lands.
3. Replace dead trees or shrubs and control the undesired vegetation until the planting is in a fully functional condition.
4. Any pruning or removal of vegetation will be conducted in a manner that maintains the intended purpose.
5. Periodically, another habitat evaluation of the target species will be scored. Adjustments shall be made according to the CRITERIA.
6. Any use of fertilizers, mechanical treatments, prescribed burns, chemical treatments shall not compromise the intended purpose of this practice. Biological controls; i.e., predator or parasitic pests, or grazing of domestic animals shall be implemented where available or feasible.